

"BABEȘ-BOLYAI" UNIVERSITY CLUJ-NAPOCA
THE FACULTY OF ORTHODOX THEOLOGY
DOCTORAL SCHOOL "ISIDOR TODORAN"

SUMMARY

Creation in the septenarian logic of the book of Revelation

Scientific coordinator:
Prof. Prof. Univ. Dr. Tofană Stelian

Candidate:
Mihalcea Adrian Marius

Cluj-Napoca
2019

CONTENT

| | |
|--|----|
| PRELIMINARY | 1 |
| 1. DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS | 6 |
| 1.1. Creation in the Old Testament | 6 |
| 1.1.1. Creation in Genesis | 6 |
| 1.1.2. Creation in the other books of the Old Testament | 21 |
| 1.2. Creation in the New Testament | 30 |
| 1.2.1. The theme of creation in the Gospel of John | 30 |
| 1.2.2. Creation in the Synoptic Gospels, Acts of the Apostles and Epistles | 41 |
| 1.3. Creator and creation | 46 |
| 1.3.1. Jesus and the Scripture | 46 |
| 1.3.2. Jesus and the creation | 48 |
| 1.3.3. Jesus Christ the Creator. | 52 |
| 2. NUMEROLOGY IN BIBLE AND EXTRABIBLICAL VISION | 56 |
| 2.1. Numerology in the Old Testament Period | 56 |
| 2.1.1. The origin of symbolic numbers | 57 |
| 2.1.2. Development of symbolic numbers | 58 |
| 2.2. Mesopotamian numerical system | 59 |
| 2.2.1. The sacred numbers | 60 |
| 2.2.2. Mesopotamian influence on biblical writings | 62 |
| 2.2.3. Figurative or "favorite" numbers | 63 |
| 2.2.4. Numerical symmetry in the Old Testament | 63 |
| 2.3. The inter-testamental period | 68 |
| 2.4. Numerology in the New Testament | 69 |
| 2.4.1. Number six | 70 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 2.4.2. The importance of number seven | 71 |
| 2.4.3. Number twelve | 73 |
| 2.4.4. Number twenty-four | 75 |
| 2.4.5. Number one hundred | 76 |
| 2.5. Patristic writers and numerology | 77 |
| 2.6. Period of the Middle Ages and Renaissance | 80 |
| 2.7. Symbolic interpretation of numbers | 81 |
| 3. EXPLAINED PRESENCE OF THE NUMBER SEVEN IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION | 85 |
| 3.1. Background Views | 85 |
| 3.1.1. The seven churches | 85 |
| 3.1.2. The seven seals | 95 |
| 3.1.3. The seven trumpets | 110 |
| 3.2. Other septenary sequences | 118 |
| 3.2.1. Seven cups | 118 |
| 3.3. The use of number seven in apocalyptic sequences and expressions | 135 |
| 3.3.1. Seven stars | 135 |
| 3.3.2. Seven lamps | 137 |
| 3.3.3. Seven thunders..... | 140 |
| 3.3.4. Seven heads..... | 145 |
| 4. THE IMPLIED PRESENCE OF THE NUMBER SEVEN IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION..... | 148 |
| 4.1. The implicit presence of the number seven for the persons of divinity | 148 |
| 4.1.1. Father | 148 |
| 4.1.2. Son | 154 |
| 4.1.3. Holy Spirit | 162 |
| 4.2. Humanity, characters and beings | 169 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 4.2.1. Nation, language, tribe and people | 169 |
| 4.2.3. Seven characters in Revelation 14: 14-20 | 172 |
| 4.2.4. The locusts of the Abyss | 182 |
| 4.2.5. Four living creatures | 185 |
| 4.3. Seven beatitudes | 186 |
| 4.4. The implicit presence of number seven in places and cultic events | 194 |
| 4.4.1. The Tabernacle | 194 |
| 4.4.2. Seven Christological hymns in Revelation | 208 |
| 4.5. Events, natural phenomena and natural elements | 220 |
| 4.5.1. The Abyss | 220 |
| 4.5.2. The reason for the Exodus | 222 |
| 4.6. Other words and categories mentioned | 228 |
| 4.6.1. Power | 228 |
| 4.6.2. White garments | 231 |
| 4.6.3. The Coming soon | 235 |
| 4.7. Other words and categories for multiples of the number | 236 |
| 4.7.1. Lamb | 236 |
| 5. NUMBER 7 AS AN INDICATOR TO THE CREATING GOD | 237 |
| 5.1. The septenary logic of creation in protology | 237 |
| 5.1.1. The central reason | 237 |
| 5.1.2. The vision of the end | 241 |
| 5.1.3. An act of morality | 243 |
| 5.1.4. Human reality | 246 |
| 5.2. Judgment and salvation in the septenary logic of creation | 250 |
| 5.2.1. Divine Savior Activities | 250 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 5.2.2. The Judgment | 252 |
| 5.2.3. The Restoration of the image of God | 253 |
| 5.2.4. The Restoration of creation | 254 |
| 5.2.5. Verbal parallels between the flood and creation | 256 |
| 5.2.6. Salvation in re-creation | 260 |
| 5.3. Number seven, sign of the Creator | 262 |
| CONCLUSIONS | 273 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY..... | 275 |

Summary

Keywords: revelation, creation, septenary, numerology, seven, trumpets, seals, cups.

The biblical account begins with creation (Gen. 1-2) and ends with a description of a more glorious creation (Rev. 21-22). Between these two takes place the Restoration of the Kingdom of God and the History of Redemption. The correspondence between the beginning and the end is amazing; the end resumes the beginning, but adds something more, qualitatively speaking. The book of Revelation reveals the complete teleological goals of God which He has set out to accomplish from the beginning. Specifically, those contained in Revelation portray the climax of the Redeeming history. John's vision captures the *new*¹ creation made by Jesus Christ. In this regard, G. K. Beale writes:

The image of the new covenant, the new temple, the new Israel and the new Jerusalem affirms the future fulfillment of the main prophetic themes of the Old Testament and the New Testament, which find their climax in the new creation. The new creation, itself, is the most general of these themes, of which the other (four) are only facets.²

In other words, the new creation is depicted with the redeemed people, a new habitat and the presence of God. This supports the kingdom that developed through the account of Scripture. John describes this fact when he writes in Revelation 21:

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth have passed away; and the sea is gone. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from heaven from God, prepared like a bride, adorned for her bride." (Rev. 21: 1-2)

In this final vision, the new Jerusalem is the place of God's people, a place where all enemies are defeated and sin and death will no longer exist. Moreover, the nations enter through its gate, and the waters of paradise flow from the throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev. 22: 1-3). In other words, the new Jerusalem is better than Eden, because what was once lost by Adam is regained by the last Adam, Jesus.

In the eternal kingdom of God, Christ is the King. In the great vision of Revelation, John describes *the throne of God*, a symbol of His sovereign rule.³ In fact, only in chapters four and five, appear 17 of the 34 references in the book. In these two chapters, we can make a crucial

¹ The use of the Greek term *kaino*, (new) usually implies a qualitative superiority in comparison with the old one.

² G. K. BEALE, "Apocalypse (book)", in NDBT, ed. T. Desmond Alexander et al., Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000, 357.

³ For example, Revelation 1: 4; 3:21; 4-5; 7: 9-11; 14: 3; 19: 4-5

observation - the inclusion of Christ. Christ declared himself "the first and the last one" (Rev. 1: 17-19).

By highlighting the divine throne, John's apocalyptic visions reveals that the re-creation of the Kingdom strengthens the Emperor's absolute authority over all that exists on earth.⁴ In other words, by virtue of His bloody victory, Jesus, as king, holds sovereign rule. The kingdom of God is fully restored through Christ and extended over the new heaven and over the new earth. (Rev. 21: 1)

At first, God created heaven and earth (Gen. 1), and *then* placed the man in the garden of Eden (Gen. 2). However, in the end, God gathers people who are from every tribe, language, people and nation that He has made throughout the redemption history and *then* re-creates a place for them to live. This is an important reversal of the order. God's priority in the New Testament is to make people, saints redeemed for Himself, and then restore the earth so that they may inhabit it. In other words, John's focus is on the people of the kingdom.

In fact, John proclaims in Revelation that God has created an international community of people who will populate His new creation (Rev. 21:24, 26; 22: 2). This shows the final fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise (Gen. 12: 1-3; 15: 5; 17: 4-6; 18:18). This divine oath to Abraham contributes to the larger narrative that Genesis anticipated: a future king who will play a central role in realizing God's plan on earth.⁵

Moreover, we must note that this seed, Christ (Gal. 3-4), mediates the blessings of God's covenant for nations (Revelation 21:24; 22: 2). Thus John declares:"Behold, God's dwelling is with the men. He will dwell with them and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God"(Rev. 21: 3).

This statement emerges from the formula of the covenant proclaimed throughout the Old Testament (Gen. 17:17; Exod. 6: 7; 29:45; Lev. 26:12; Ezekiel 36:28; 37:23, 27; Zech. 8: 8) . Thus, we can say that all the promises of the covenant, made through Abraham, renewed through Moses and incarnated in Christ, are finally fulfilled.

Both Israel and the church come together in the new Jerusalem. In Revelation 21: 12-14, John describes that "on the gates of the new Jerusalem were inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel" (21:12) and "the city wall had twelve foundations, and on them were

⁴ Alexander, From Eden to New Jerusalem, 75.

⁵ Ibid., 164-165.

the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb "(21:14). In this description, "the history of Israel and the church are fulfilled in the new Jerusalem." ⁶That is, both the Israel of the Old Testament and the church of the New Testament have their place as God's people in the final recognition of the church of God. Then, in order to complete God's teleological plan, the new creation is meant to house God's multinational populations. The promises made to Israel are not canceled, but extended and fulfilled through salvation in the New Testament community.

Finally, we can discuss the physical reality of the "new" creation. The Bible assures us that God will create a new earth on which we will live the praises of God in glorious, resurrected bodies. Therefore, on this new earth, we hope to spend eternity, enjoying its beauty, exploring its resources and using the treasures to the glory of God. As God will make the new earth His dwelling place, and since God dwells where heaven is, we will continue to be in heaven while we are on the new earth. For heaven and earth will no longer be divided, as they are now, but will be one. But to escape the new earth out of sight when we think of the final state of the believers is to especially impoverish the biblical teaching about the life to come.⁷

The final project of the kingdom of God is to renew and perfect His fallen creation, so that it may become a holy place of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (see Rev. 21: 1–22: 5). In that cosmic sanctuary, the purpose of God, of His solemn commitment, will be fully realized, as he declares: "He who overcomes will inherit these and I will be to God and he will be My son." 21: 7). These blessings of light and life will always descend upon the people of God, for He who sits at the right hand of the Father is the Lamb that was slain and now rules (Rev. 22.1-5; cf. 5.1-14).⁸

The present thesis "The Septenary logic of the book of Revelation" is the summary of a preoccupation born out of the passion for eschatology on the one hand and the attraction for the Scripture's symbolism on the other hand. The research work was difficult and the theological field explored, less battered. The understanding, spiritual patience and guidance of the Priest PhD Stelian Tofană, my coordinating professor, motivated me to succeed. Therefore, beyond any academic value, the present work is an expression of gratitude. Yet, it is not the end of the road, but, on the contrary, the spring for new challenges.

⁶ Richard Bauckham, *Highlight of Prophecy: Studies in the Book of Revelation / Revelation*, (London: T&T Clark, 1993), 312.

⁷ Hoekema, 274.

⁸ Swain, "Trinity, Revelation, and Reading," 32-34

The thesis is structured in five major chapters. They form a concentric circle that encompasses creation in the Old and New Testaments, numerology in the biblical and extrabiblical vision, explicit evidence of the number seven in the book of Revelation, implicit evidence of the number seven in the book of Revelation, the number seven - sign of the Creator God.

Chapter one initially addresses protology. The major reason for this starting point is determined by the fact that if a theological system is wrong in protology will be wrong in eschatology. And a philosophical system that does not establish safe landmarks for origins will fail in its attempt to determine a path or destination. In Genesis the author uses the ancient language to convey that God is sovereign, distinct from His creation and organized in His purposes. The creation has a functional purpose and a finality at a climax in time. The creationist model of the seven literal days is the ubiquitous stereotype in biblical books and, implicitly, in the book of Revelation. The creation appears as an analogy of history being oriented towards judgment or salvation. The creation disintegrates or is reborn according to the attitude of the people towards their Creator. As a supreme proof of the creator's connection with His creatures, God enters into His creation through Jesus Christ. The apostle John captures masterfully this fact in the prologue of his book. The parallels with the days of creation from Genesis are unmistakable. The other writers of the New Testament make reference in their works to the creation, and quote in particular Genesis chapter 1-2. The reference to events (the flood), to representative characters of the book, (Adam, Noah, Abel) shows that they had no doubts about their veridicity. Jesus himself, in the Gospels, mentioned creation and thereby guaranteed the authenticity of the Old Testament. The weight of his words does not lie in the fact that He spoke *about* the creation but in that He spoke *as* its creator.

The seven days of the creation reach the climax in the seventh day. Number seven is a key in the interpretation of creation. A foray into symbolism and its use is the object of the second chapter. The numerical symbolism is one of the difficult topics of hermeneutics because there is no express reference in the Scripture regarding the significance of numbers.

From ancient times the people between Tigris and Euphrates have developed numerical systems. They have assigned special meanings to some of the numbers beyond the value in themselves. The Babylonians and the Mesopotamians incorporated in some numbers meanings for the sacred. Later on, the Greeks have developed their own understanding regarding numbers. All

these writings emphasize the fact that the numbers were associated with the sky, the earth, deities.

Among all numbers, a few received special significances. However, in different biblical and extra-biblical cultures and civilizations, number seven is common. Jews and Christians have used it in different contexts and the multitude of appearances places it as their favorite number. It seems that its special significance lies in the fact that it is the expression of perfection or fullness and that it is a mark or a sign of the Creating God. The peak of the Creation and the separation of the seventh day from all the others seems to suggest this idea. This hypothesis led to the creation of the third chapter.

This chapter shows how the Apocalypse seems organized in a septenary macrostructure. In addition, the various apocalyptic parts or sequences, microstructures, are organized into septets. I have selected, due to the limits of this work, a part of the explicit appearances in the book. Nearly without exception, the selected sequences are closely related to the theme of creation. The direct reference to the *seven* (seven seals, seven corkscrews, seven cups, seven thunders, etc.) and the highlighting of the constituent elements of the creation give organic unity to the thesis and support the theme of the research paper.

The fourth chapter highlights the implicit nature of number seven in the book of Revelation. What does not appear at first glance does not mean that it does not exist. That is why we can be surprised by the large number of the appearances of seven in different situations. The doxologies, the attributes of the Lamb, the reason for the Exodus, the abyss, the divine name, the temple, the various characters or creatures are marked by this number. But, ultimately, what is the purpose of this frequency? Not statistical, surely.

This purpose is highlighted in chapter five. There is an intention in the origin of the first things, in protology. There is a logic in the eschatological accomplishments of the restored creation. And it must be a reason why the creation of the world, its disintegration on the flood and its restoration in the Parousia are guided by the number seven. The reason from the background is the cosmic controversy of worship to the Creator or to the creature. The theme of creation in Revelation provides a basis for worship and for a moral life.

Human beings exist because they were brought to life through a plan. False worship opened the way for evolutionary, existentialist, naturalistic or pantheistic views. The parallel between the book of Genesis and the book of Revelation, creation and restoration, is an

eschatological reality. In protology and eschatology God has left a sign to show Him as the Creator and Restorer. The seventh day, the crown of the first creation, connects the first earth with the new earth, the first heaven with the new heaven. It is a mark of God in history and His signature in the Scripture. (Isaiah 66: 22-23)